

Saint Marie de l'Incarnation, OSU (1599–1672)

Marie Guyart, the first woman missionary to North America was born in Tours, France, in 1599. Marie de l'Incarnation's life as a mystic began as a young girl when she had a vision of the Lord asking her to be totally His — to which she boldly replied, "Yes!" Her mysticism continued growing throughout her life as she sought perfect union with God.



Despite her early calling to give her life to the Lord, she was married at 17 to a silk dealer with whom she had a son named Claude. Widowed at 19 with a six-month-old son, she was left responsible for her husband's bankrupt business. She did not remarry and provided for her son by earning a living with embroidery. Then came several years of working for her brother-in-law's business as a maid and manager and eventually was given total responsibility for her brother-in-law's business.

Her life changed drastically when she felt the Lord's call to religious life at age 27. Leaving her son in her sister's care, Guyart entered the novitiate of the Ursuline order, taking vows as Sister Marie de l'Incarnation in 1633. The same year she was stirred by a dream in which God showed her a beautiful and scenic land, after which He disclosed to her that "it was Canada that I showed you; you must go there to build a house for Jesus and Mary." She became absorbed with missionary zeal for the New World and set out for Quebec in 1639. Her skills in business were a great asset in her ability to start a school for Native American girls — the first educational institution for women in North America. She was responsible for building the first monastery on the continent, serving as superior and novice mistress for the growing order. Although not a martyr like some of her Jesuit contemporaries in the New World, Marie de l'Incarnation was an evangelist and missionary in their truest sense, even learning four native languages and developing dictionaries to share the Gospel and educate the natives.

Surrounded by her sisters, she died on April 30, 1672, at the age of 72. She was beatified on June 22, 1980 and canonised by Pope Francis April 3, 2014.

LINK:

<http://www.ursulines-uc.com/rappeler/femmes-de-foi-et-daudace/marie-de-lincarnation/>